2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

culties are settled by the marriage sureties [1] who only report to him after the affair is settled. In disputes of unusual gravity, the headman may call in unrelated persons [2] to arbitrate, but he himself must be present.

His own behaviour is expected to be exemplary. Any deviation from the norm is likely to be strictly censured, not only by his own villagers, but also by other village headmen, who may say, 'Important men do not behave in this way.' A man who had an argument with his sister's son was told this. He had taken the dispute to a neighbouring headman who decided against the village headman and rebuked him for behaving in a way not consonant with his position. Village headmen should be above squabbling with their villagers. A village headman who was also a leech had virtually raped a woman whom he was treating. He tried to maintain this was part of the treatment. Her matrilineal relatives reported the matter to the headman of her village and he brought the errant headman in front of the chief who said, 'You are wrong to do this when you are an important man. You are a big man and you act as a commoner does. You ought to be able to show the commoners how to behave.' He was made to pay a compensation of £2 10*s*. and fined 10*s*. Had he been a commoner he would have been made to pay a compensation of only 30*s*.

The ultimate sanction to which all headmen are subject, is that their people will leave them if they behave badly. This was the fate of Cikumba.

In 1944 Cikumba had a village of about 30 huts. The son of the first Cikumba, Meya, had two wives who were living virilocally in Cikumba's village. Meya had enlisted in the army. While he was away, Cikumba, the village headman who was Meya's father's sister's son (though he called him 'father' because of positional succession), started taking Meya's two wives to beer drinks. Meya's sister one day asked Cikumba about his behaviour, but he only said that Meya could not do anything as he was far away. Things had gone too far, however, when one morning he was seen coming out of the

[1] The representative of a spouse in all affairs arising from conjugal relationships. They are usually senior matrilineal relatives. See Chap. VI, pp. 176–7. Their rôle is discussed fully in *Marriage among the Machinga Yao of Southern Nyasaland*.

[2] *Mundu juampambali*, i.e. a person from outside.

622 hut of one of Meya's wives. Meya's sister wrote a letter to tell him
558 of this and he replied that he could do nothing until he returned.
837 In 1946, Meya returned to be demobilized. The third night after his
166 return he questioned his wives about their fidelity during his absence. They at first held out against him but before long he intimidated them into admitting that they had slept with the village headman. Meya now went to complain to Mapata, who was Cikumba's perpetual mother's brother, and he said that he would come to the village the next day.

When Mapata came he confronted Cikumba with the accusation. Cikumba denied it until Mapata called the women. When they confessed Cikumba was forced to admit his guilt. Mapata now decided to call in an arbitrator, Isa, an important but unrelated headman who lived close at hand. Isa said he would come the following day when the matter could be thrashed out. When Isa and Mapata came they asked the women about the affair in public. They admitted the charge and Cikumba did not deny it. Isa then remonstrated with him for being a bad man and said that he was ashamed to hear about it. Cikumba had to pay £6 10s. to the injured man, Meya, who, however, refused to take it. He argued that Cikumba ought to have behaved as a father to him. But Cikumba had not. He, Meya, could not remain living in the village because his wives would be as Cikumba's wives. Isa said that he could not object because Cikumba had caused the trouble and had broken the village himself. How could he complain? Meya took two-thirds of the huts in the village away with him.

The Headman as a Representative of a Corporate Group

622 The headman is not only responsible for keeping the peace
689 between the members of his village, but he is also supposed to control his members in their relationships with other villages. If members take corporate action against other villages, even if they do so without the consent of the headman, the chief will consider the village headman responsible. This was brought out clearly in the relationships between Cikoja, Mapata and Masimbo in Chiwalo's section.

622 Cikoja and Mapata are two of the more important headmen in
689 Chiwalo's section. Masimbo is a minor village headman who lives
423 in Mapata's village area. The quarrel arose over the question of
226 fishing rights in a small pool lying between the two main villages. This pool was excavated by Cikoja and his villagers in 1924 during

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

the significance of this formulation of his position is clear. It is when he shows partiality that the village under him is likely to break up. If he sides with his children his matrilineal kin are almost sure to move out; if he sides with his matrilineal kin, his children are likely either to return to their matrilineal village or, if they are adult, split off to set up a village of their own. The situation is precarious for the headman and it is very difficult for him to avoid a split in the village if he cannot keep the two opposed groups at peace.

My investigations show that few villages have contained patrilaterally-linked groups through the lives of two village headmen, unless these groups were descended from slaves. When the headman dies his successor assumes his name and social rôle. He also assumes the position of father towards the remaining children, who are in fact his cross-cousins. But his relationship towards them is not the same as that of father to children. The intimate link of the blood tie has been lost and the relationship becomes formalized. As more and more headmen succeed the genealogical link between the patrilaterally-linked groups and the dominant matrilineage becomes more and more remote, and the relationship becomes more and more casual. What usually happens is that shortly after the death of the headman and father, the patrilaterally-linked group takes exception to what the new headman does or says and moves off to found a village of its own. The case history I quoted earlier [1] brought this out clearly. The new headman had had intercourse with the wives of his 'son'. The son complained to the arbitrators in the dispute that 'he should have been as a father to me, and he is not'. The result was that the son refused compensation, and moved out of the village with his sisters to build on his own. When this happens the father–son relationship between the two villages is preserved and perpetuated, but the link is entirely formal and co-operation between them is limited to mutual attendance at funerals.

Patrilaterally-linked Groups as the Legacy of Slavery

Slave-groups in a village are usually linked patrilaterally to the dominant lineage. This is because the headman who was usually the captor of the slaves kept the women as concubines. They were given quasi-child status in the village, so that their children

[1] 'The Split of Cikumba Village', see Chap. V, p. 127.

3: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

585 drum of her married life begins. The man and woman live together peaceably enough as
462 a rule, each attending to his own sphere of work. The man builds the house, the woman muds the floors; she sweeps and cooks, she is the hewer of wood and drawer of water. The man hunts, fishes, makes mats, baskets, the grain store, game traps, and bark-cloth; he looks after the tobacco, and makes the snuff, while his wife brews the beer. He it is who fashions the gourd vessels and carves the spoons, while the woman is the potter (Pl. III, 4) and pipe-maker. Together they hoe and together they harvest, but to the woman falls the monotonous drudgery of pounding and sifting the corn for flour.

842 The Yao have a custom like that of the Anyanja. A sister brings to the house of the
[522] newly wedded pair a log of green wood from a *mbanga* tree which is very hard; the log may be two feet in diameter and four feet long. Should the bride not become pregnant before it is burned away, the husband is laughed at and they may both be teased by having
[558] many logs brought to the house. A man who has no children is much despised and there is a saying, "He must have eaten some ground-nuts," punning on the word for a thick-skinned variety of ground-nut, *chimbuvila*, a word which also means sterility. An impotent
[837] man may, with the consent of his wife, introduce some male friend into the house, any children born in consequence being claimed as the husband's. He usually chooses some friend from a distance to obviate any attachment springing up between him and the wife. Two married couples may, all consenting, exchange consorts for the night, but they never live together like this for long periods.

582 There is one well-defined marriage taboo; a man may not marry a woman of his own
[611] clan. In the old days, he was also restricted to his own tribe, except in the case of slave wives and wives by capture. Since the clan is inherited from the mother,[1] a man may not
[587] marry the daughters of his maternal aunts, but he may marry his other female cousins. He may not marry two sisters nor a deceased wife's sister; neither do two brothers marry two sisters.

595 The number of wives is limited only by the husband's ability to provide for them. In addition to free wives, a man might formerly have a number of slave wives. The head wife is called *kuuyeto*, the other wives, *manguwba*. The word given by Macdonald, *akuuyeto*,[2] meaning the junior wives, is a Chinyanja word and, I think, wrongly applied.

582 It has been said that a man always marries into the village of his wife. For this reason,
[842] female children are always prized as it means an increase in the number of able-bodied men added to the village. In rare cases, the wife might be taken to the husband's village,
[583] as is the Anyanja practice.[3] This, of course, is true in the case of chiefs and headmen. Here, we may also note that no payment is made for the wife and no dowry is received with her.

584 To revert to betrothal, occasionally the sponsors will not agree to the marriage and a
843 runaway match takes place, but in the end, the marriage is usually regularized by the sponsors coming to an agreement. If, however, the woman has in the meantime become

[1] Vide infra, p. 282. [2] Op. cit., p. 131. [3] Stannus, op. cit., p. 309.

4: Stahnus D-5 (ca. 1909)1910 FT7 Yao FT7
Marovi FR4

M 832 this is then added to a brew of new beer and given to her husband to drink. He will then think of and love only herself. This is said to have caused the death of some husbands.

Mpasi: medicine made and drunk by a woman to make her beloved by a certain man.

M 837 844 [847] At confinement a woman has to answer whether she has ever committed adultery; if she denies an adultery she may die, if she owns up and gives the name of the man this can be remedied. Adultery on the part of the father or mother is said to be a cause of abortion.

M 897 A man going away from his village for several months and leaving his wife behind and wishing her to remain faithful puts a knife into its sheath and hangs it in the hut, telling his brother. It is then believed that should anyone commit adultery with his wife separation after the coitus is impossible till some third party comes and pulls the knife from its sheath, and in doing so becomes a witness of the adultery.

M 833 [M 262] [825] [522] Eating of eggs is believed to cause impotence in children or adults. Much fat eaten is said to have the same effect. It is believed that if a hare run up against the leg of a man while going through the forest he will become impotent. It is for this reason that dung of the hare is put at the door of a man to make fun of him as impotent. This is a trick played by *Adsukulu*.

M Y 837 263 753 If a woman who has committed adultery puts salt into the food while cooking, of which her husband will partake, will thereby cause his death. At the present time among the Yao-Mañanja community a woman always calls one of the children to do it—this speaks for itself. A woman, after connection with her husband, putting salt in food, may cause illness among any children partaking of the food.

M 837 If a man accuse his wife of adultery and she denies it, he will procure medicine and place it under her pillow, then in the middle of the night she will wake her husband and tell him the name of her lover.

M 787 777 *Mpingu* = ill omen. A journey would always be stopped if on setting out one of the party die; or should they meet an ant-eater or black snake. It used to be considered a sign of bad luck if one of them knocked the toes against a stone; now if blood flows from the big toe they say it presages good luck.

Y 832 826 The Yao at the age of sixteen years climbs the *mtumbi* tree, and finding a fruit which is soft makes a hole in the middle and inserts the penis. After this procedure the penis is said to enlarge as the fruit grows; when the size desired is reached the fruit is cut down.

M 827 The native says that every one has a small animal inside the ear, the sounds it makes causes the man to hear. If the animal escapes the man becomes deaf. The animal is said to be ¼-inch long, and wax is said to be its excrement.

M 484 777 Where a man rests on a journey he often puts a stone in the fork of the nearest tree; on many journeys there are regular halting places, often at cross roads, and here every passer-by adds a stone for luck, making quite big heaps.

6: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1947) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

ndembo, a woman who is pregnant for the first time;[1] *kanembere*, a woman who has one or two children; *mjembere*, a woman who has three or four children, and lastly, *ndabwa*, a woman who is past child-bearing age.

The information which I have been able to collect on abortifacients and contraceptives suggests that they are not used by married people merely to prevent their having more children, but that they are used by people who wish to avoid pregnancies which would be embarrassing, for example, by a woman whose husband is a labour migrant. To what extent the abortifacients and contraceptives are efficacious I cannot say; some, I know for certain, rely on a magical principle, for example, the medicated cord worn by a man during intercourse. On the other hand, the abortifacients taken orally may have some active ingredient.

A barren woman or an impotent man is regarded with some embarrassment and the marriage sureties (*ariamangwe*) of a childless couple will go to considerable trouble and expense consulting diviners and leeches in an attempt to make their wards productive. Childless couples are regarded as not fully adult and are treated in a patronizing way by those who have borne children. Since a man may marry other wives, barrenness in a woman is a cause of sorrow to her husband, but is not in itself a ground for divorce. Where the man is impotent, however, the woman may divorce him on this ground, though she usually takes a paramour and forces her husband to an action for damages which automatically leads to a divorce because it is the usual practice in these cases for the court to ask the woman if she wants to be divorced from her husband.

In contrast to the satisfaction shown at the birth of a child is the sense of awe evinced when a child is still-born or the woman miscarries. The Yao do not distinguish between still-births and abortions, both events being known by the word *kwanaga*. This is a verb and refers to the process of abortion; there is no term for the dead foetus itself. I made no attempt to enumerate miscarriages and still-births because they are supposed to be due to breaches of sexual taboos on the part of the husband and wife, and interviewees were naturally reluctant to mention them. Miscarriages and still-births are greatly feared, and the woman is considered to be in a very dangerous condition until she and her husband have carried out a ritual purification. Should a man have intercourse with a woman who has miscarried and not yet been purified he will contract a disease called *kwasa* which is believed to be invariably fatal. Still-born children or aborted foetuses are buried in a hole dug with sharpened sticks in the bush by the women, whereas children who are born alive and die afterwards are buried in the graveyard in graves dug by men with hoes. The burial spots of still-born babies or aborted foetuses are marked with a stone or broken pottery, since it is believed that to step on them will induce an illness.

The concern of the interested kin-groups is shown in the child-birth procedure. Birth normally takes place in a hut in the presence of the older female relatives of the woman and the female representatives of the man. The husband's representatives are necessary because the Yao, like many other Central African peoples, believe that an adulterine child will not be born to the woman unless she confesses (*kupasa*) the name of the genitor. If she persists in concealing the identity of the genitor, they

[1] *ndembo* – elephant, hence ivory. The terms *litilo* and *ndembo* here both refer to the ivory bands traditionally worn by the woman in the pregnancy initiation ceremony.

11: Sanderson D-5 (ca. 1920) 1920 FT7 Yao FT7

The alternative term, *wao*, common to nearly all Bantu languages, is usually reserved for "own father," but not always.

Latterly, though the relationship is really *akwaye*, the husbands of a man's "daughters" or "grand-daughters" are called *atati* in a complimentary sense, not of course in defining relationship.

The word *akwaye* is rapidly falling into disrepute for men, and is, nowadays, never used in speaking to a man of that relationship, though used freely as a mode of address to women.

Amao (or *achikulu-wangu*, *-wao*, etc., "my, his mother") may be further defined as "great" or "little" in the same manner as *atati*.

The parents of any *atati* or *amao*, and those of one's wife are called *ambuje* ("grandparent"). Great-grandparents are specified as "father" or "mother of my grandfather (or mother)."

The founder of a family is called *Likolo*, especially in prayer—except for the augmentative prefix obviously the same word as *Nampolo*," a parent," which includes all "fathers" and "mothers."

It is curious in this connection that a name for little girls in general, if one does not know their real name, is *chikolo*. All these words seem to be derived from *-kolo* ("have," "possess"), and refer, probably, either to actual or potential possession of offspring.

Achinampolo are distinguished as "male" or "female" according as they belong to the father's or mother's side—irrespective of their own sex.

Conclusions.—The Yao nomenclature of relationships, bearing as it does the evidence of former group marriages, is, like other classificatory systems, gradually changing in conformity with the development of the race, so that it can be used to express consanguinity; Rivers has, I believe, called attention to this process.

The Yao custom—now dying out—of lending one's wife to a visitor (usually a close friend) may be a remnant of ideas carried on from communal marriage, though such a privilege is never given to a relative.

In the same way a man who has had no children (a great stigma) may request his friend to help him—he will never ask a relative—and all of the three parties will keep the secret of the true paternity of any children resulting.

In many tribes the marriage of brother and sister, or a man with his sister's child, is permitted to compensate for the law by which a man's property goes to the son of a stranger, but nothing of the kind is allowed among the Yaos. Indeed, they view any incestuous union with particular horror, and such must be very rare. I have heard of a case of a man committing incest with the idea that he would thereby become endued with supernatural power, but all he gained was ostracism; in the old days he would have been burned.